

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----251930Z 108779 /40
O 251615Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2570

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 2742

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINS CG
SUBJECT: SHABA INVASION: CONSULTATIONS WITH MOBUTU, MARCH 25

REF: (A) KINSHASA 2670 (B) STATE 65136 (C) STATE 64366
(D) STATE 65371 (E) KINSHASA 2683

SUMMARY: DURING MARCH 25 MEETING I BRIEFED MOBUTU ON THE STATUS OF OUR CONSULTATIONS WITH NIGERIANS ON MEDIATION, OUR UNDERTAKING DIRECT CONTACTS WITH CUBANS, AND DISCUSSED BOTH THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY DIMENSIONS OF THE SHABA PROBLEM. I STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF ZAIRE'S CONTINUED COOPERATION IN SEEKING A POLITICAL SOLUTION AND NEED TO AVOID ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT IMPEDE ACHIEVEMENT OF THAT GOAL. MOBUTU INDICATED HIS AGREEMENT ON MOST POINTS AND UNDERSTANDING OF REASONS WHY WE PLACED PRIORITY ON POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. HE REITERATED HIS CONCERN, HOWEVER, RE OUR RELUCTANCE TO EXTEND MORE MILITARY AID AND THE DANGEROUS SIGNAL THIS COULD MIVE TO THOSE ATTACKING ZAIRE.
END SUMMARY

1. I SPENT AN HOUR WITH MOBUTU THIS MORNING, MARCH 25. I BEGAN BY REFERRING TO OUR PHONE CONVERSATION YESTERDAY (REF A) AND SAID I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO DISCUSS FURTHER THE REASONS WHY WE REMAINED INTENT ON PURSUING A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO THE SHABA PROBLEM AS A FIRST PRIORITY. I NOTED
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THAT BOTH PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE HAD UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO MEDIATION EFFORTS IN RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

2. MOBUTU BROKE IN, AS I EXPECTED HE WOULD, TO SAY THAT NOT ALL OF THOSE STATEMENTS WERE VERY FAVORABLE FOR ZAIRE. HE MENTIONED PARTICULARLY THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE REMARK YESTERDAY

TO THE EFFECT THAT THE US HAD NO MILITARY OBLIGATION TO ZAIRE, EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT HIS MIGHT ONLY ENCOURAGE THE ANGOLANS AND THEIR CUBAN AND SOVIET SUPPORTERS TO PURSUE THEIR AGGRESSION AGAINST ZAIRE. I SAID THAT, WHILE I HAD NO OFFICIAL ELABORATION, FROM READING THE TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS I HAD THE IMPRESSION HE WAS SPEAKING MORE IN THE CONTEXT OF WHETHER WE WERE ACTUALLY COMMITTED TO MAKE FURTHER ARMS SHIPMENTS IN RESPONSE TO THE SHABA ATTACK, AND NOT SO MUCH IN TERMS OF OUR ONGOING, LONGER-RANGE FMS PROGRAM. AS MOBUTU WAS WELL AWARE, THE QUESTION OF THE DEGREE OF OUR RESPONSE HAD AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST BOTH IN THE US MEDIA AND THE CONGRESS, AND THE ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE CLEAR THAT IT INTENDS TO WEIGH ALL FACTORS CAREFULLY. MOBUTU THEN EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT SECRETARY VANCE HAD TOLD THE PRESS THAT, IN VIEW OF MEDIATION EFFORTS, NO ADDITIONAL SHIPMENTS WILL BE MADE TO ZAIRE. I CORRECTED THIS, NOTING THAT THE SECRETARY HAD SAID SUCH SHIPMENTS MAY RPT MAY BE UNNECESSARY.

3. I THEN RETURNED TO THE QUESTION OF MEDIATION AND GAVE MOBUTU A RUN-DOWN OF THE SECRETARY'S CONSULTATIONS WITH NIGERIAN FONMIN GARBA (REFS B, C) WHICH, I NOTED, SEEMED TO HAVE GONE VERY WELL. MOBUTU LISTENED WITH INTEREST AND SEEMED PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS. WHEN I MENTIONED GARBA'S CONCERN THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO PURSUE THE KATANGANS ACROSS THE BORDER INTO ANGOLA MIGHT PROVOKE AN ESCALATION OF THE CONFLICT, MOBUTU SAID GARBA HAD EXPRESSED THE SAME CONCERN TO NGUZA AND HE, MOBUTU, UNDERSTOOD WELL WHY THIS WOULD INDEED CAUSE PROBLEMS. I ALSO NOTED THET SECRETARY VANCE HAD CONFIRMED WE WERE TALKING TO THE SOVIETS ABOUT THE SHABA PROBLEM. I THEN WENT ON TO CONVEY THE
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SECRETARY'S MESSAGE CONCERNING US-CUBAN DISCUSSIONS (REF D), NOTING OUR HOPE TO BROADEN THE TALKS TO COVER CUBA'S INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA AND ITS POLICIES IN AFRICA.

4. I SAID ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES--INCLUDING INSTRUCTIONS JUST SENT TO OUR PLSTS IN A NUMBER OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH MOBUTU HAD SUGGESTED TO US--CLEARLY SHOWED OUR CONTINUING DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL IN AFRICA. AS FOR THE SHABA, OUR STRESS ON AN AFRICAN SOLUTION DOES NOT MEAN WE INTEND TO WASH OUR HANDS OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR. ON THE CONTRARY, WE ARE PLAYING AN ACTIVE ALTHOUGH DISCREET ROLE WITH MANY PARTIES IN SUPPORT OF SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION. I EXPRESSED THE PERSONAL VIEW THAT A POLITICAL SOLUTION WAS BY FAR THE BEST AND PERHAPS THE ONLY FEASIBLE WAY TO RESOLVE THE SHABA PROBLEM.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2571

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5. I SAID I HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE POSITIVE STEPS MOBUTU HIMSELF HAD TAKEN IN THE DIPLOMATIC AREA, AND EXPRESSED HOPE WE COULD COUNT ON HIS CONTINUED CLOSE COOPERATION. I THOUGHT IT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO AVOID ANY ACTIONS THAT MIGHT HARM THE CHANCES FOR MEDIATION OR PROVIDE LUANDA WITH EXCUSES--SUCH AS CLAMIS OF ZAIRIAN BORDER PROVOCATIONS--FOR ABANDONING THE POLITICAL TRACK. ON THE OTHER HAND, I COULD SEE AN ADVANTAGE IN FINDING WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR MEDIATION, WHICH WOULD STRENGTHEN ZAIRE'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION AND CERTAINLY BE WELL RECEIVED IN THE US. IN THIS REGARD, I FAVORABLY NOTED A REPORT THIS MORNING THAT THAT THE GOZ HAD STATED IT HAD NO OBJECTION TO NIGERIAN MEDIATION.

6. MOBUTU AGREED ON THE NEED TO AVOID CHARGES OF NOT WANTING A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AND, IN THIS REGARD, SAID HE HAD NO INTENTION OF STIRRING UP TROUBLE ELSEWHERE ALONG THE BORDER. HE THEN WENT ON TO REVIEW SOME OF THE GOZ'S SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO GAIN DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT, NOTING AMIN'S DECISION TO SEND FOOD TO ZAIRE (WHICH HE FOUND AMUSING) AND THE SUPPORT FOR ZAIRE PUBLISHED BY THE LIBYAN PRESS (WHICH HE FOUND MYSTIFYING). HE SAID THE GOZ WOULD CONTINUE ITS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND WOULD SEEK ADDITIONAL WAYS TO INDICATE A POSITIVE APPROACH TO MEDIATION. THEN, HE SAID, IF ANGOLA BACKS AWAY THE ONUS FOR FAILURE WILL BE ON THEM.

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UM TURNING TO MILITARY MATTERS, I SAID I DID NOT YET HAVE A DEFINITIVE REACTION TO MOBUTU'S SUGGESTION THAT WE MIGHT FIND A WAY TO HELP FINANCE BELGIAN ARMS AND AMMUNITION SHIPMENTS

TO ZAIRE. HOWEVER, I DID NOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOMETHING ALONG THESE LINES MIGHT BE FEASIBLE. AS FOR MERCENARIES, I REFERRED TO GENERAL BABIA'S COMMENTS TO OUR ZAMISH CHIEF ON THIS MATTER (REF E). I SAID THAT, WHILE I HAD NO OFFICIAL GUIDANCE, MY PERSONAL VIEW WAS THAT NEWS OF INTRODUCTION OF FOREIGN MERCENARIES IN SHABA, PARTICULARLY AMERICANS, ELICIT A DECIDEDLY NEGATIVE REACTION IN THE US. THE WHOLE MERCENARY QUESTION HAD PROVED HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL IN THE US DURING THE ANGOLAN WAR, AND I ANTICIPATED A SIMILAR REACTION SHOULD THEY NOW TURN UP IN SHABA. AS FOR BABIA'S SUGGESTION THAT WE MIGHT HELP IN RECRUITING ANTI-CASTRO CUBAN MERCENARIES, I THOUGHT THIS WAS CLEARLY OUT OF THE QUESTION. MOBUTU SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED WITH MY ASSESSMENT, AND SAID THE GOZ DID NOT HAVE IN MIND SEEKING USG ASSISTANCE IN RECRUITMENT. HE DID NOT EXPLICITLY CONFIRM OR DENY THAT HE INTENDED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH PUTTING MERCENARIES IN PLACE. HOWEVER, HE WENT ON TO STRESS THE URGENT NEED TO IMPROVE THE LAMENTABLE PERFORMANCE OF HIS FORCES IN SHABA. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID HE WOULD MAKE MAJOR CHANGES IN COMMAND PERSONNEL IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. MOBUTU GAVE NO DETAILED RESPONSE TO MY QUERY AS TO HOW HE INTENDED TO PROCEED MILITARILY IN SHABA, OTHER THAN TO CONFIRM THAT DEFENSE OF KOLWEZI HAD FIRST PRIORITY AND THAT HE ALSO INTENDED TO COUNTER-ATTACK AT AN EARLY DATE.

8. MOBUTU MADE A FINAL REFERENCE TO THE SERIOUS THREAT WHICH THE SHABA INVASION POSED TO ZAIRE'S HARD-PRESSED ECONOMY, BOTH IN TERMS OF DOMESTIC FINANCES AND THE NEGATIVE IMPACT IT MIGHT HAVE ON FOREIGN DONORS AND INVESTORS. HE HOPED HE COULD COUNT ON OUR CONTINUING ASSISTANCE. I SAID WE WERE PROCEEDING WITH OUR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND WERE ALERT TO NEW NEEDS WHICH MIGHT ARISE. THIS VERY SERIOUS ASPECT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF RESOLVING THE SHABA

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PROBLEM JUST AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

9. COMMENT: MOBUTU WAS IN ONE OF HIS RARE LISTENING MOODS TODAY AND SEEMED TO TAKE IN MOST OF WHAT I SAID. WHILE I SUSPECT HE HARBORS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE NIGERIAN ROLE AND TENDS TO VIEW OF THE WHOLE MEDIATION TRACK MORE IN TERMS OF POLITICAL COMPETITION THAN A SERIOUS WAY OUT OF HIS PROBLEMS, HE STILL SEEMS INCLINED TO COOPERATE. IN THIS REGARD, I BELIEVE THE FACT THAT WE OURSELVES ARE PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IS A SOURCE OF REASSURANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIM. CERTAINLY BY NOW HE UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE IN MOVING AHEAD WITH FURTHER MILITARY AID AT THIS TIME AND THE REAL IMPORTANCE WE PLACE ON A POLITICAL SOLUTION.

10. DEPT PLEASE PASS OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCE, SECESSION, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, MEETING REPORTS, ARMS SHIPMENTS, MERCENARIES, INVASIONS, INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KINSHA02742
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840083-0188, N770002-0178
Format: TEL
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770323/aaaaatdh.tel
Line Count: 224
Litigation Code IDs:
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Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 77 KINSHASA 2670, 77 STATE 65136, 77 STATE 64366, 77 STATE 65371, 77 KINSHASA 2683
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2999121
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SHABA INVASION: CONSULTATIONS WITH MOBUTU, MARCH 25
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, MASS, CG, AO, NI, US, (MOBUTU SESE SEKO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/318a61b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009